



REFRESHING RECESS NEWSLETTER WEEK #5

INCLUSION

Students with Disabilities: Recess Challenges and Solutions

● How to Include Children with Autism in Recess:

- Structured activities help open the door for everyone to participate
- Use student's interests. Embed the interest in the game (e.g. trucks, dinosaurs) that everyone will enjoy; start with short, simple activities
- Picture schedule to indicate sequence of steps in activity
- First/then chart – first play game, then do favorite activity
- Social story to describe the activity and how to participate
- Tokens/rewards for participating
- Priming: have student play game at home or another setting in school
- Instruction sheet with directions for how to play the activity
- Direct instruction to student in advance
- Prepare other students: remind students the purpose is for everyone to have fun together and encourage them to include everyone
- Communicate with parents so they can practice same games at home (Caldwell, 2010)

[students with physical disabilities may also find participation during recess challenging]

Most students love recess!

But did you know recess feels like... an unstructured environment that is noisy and visually stimulating... which may lead to an overwhelming place for a child with autism! In addition, some children with autism have difficulty socially interacting and may need extra assistance in this unique setting.



- Children with physical disabilities may struggle with being accepted and included leading to social isolation. Peers may not understand their disability and how to interact with them. Also, there may be limited playground equipment that they can use.

How to Include Children with Physical Disabilities in Recess:

- Provide playground equipment at wheelchair level
- Encourage students to play together and include children with physical and/or developmental disabilities in their game (e.g., game of catch)
- Be creative! Try to think of ways to modify a game so a child with a physical disability can play
- Start a peer buddy program! Peer buddy programs encouraged general education students to interact with, become friends, and assist special education students when needed.

CHECK THIS OUT!

Best Buddies program website (international)
www.bestbuddies.org



Caldwell, N. (2010). Social skill recreational interventions: Finding the balance. Lunch and Recess Social and Recreational Programs. Volume 5, Issue 1.

Johnson, T. (2010). Inclusion and peer buddies: Making the exception the norm. Essential Educator.



REFRESHING RECESS NEWSLETTER WEEK #5

Talking Points

Inclusion of Students with Differing Abilities

● For Students with Varying Abilities - Select Recess Activities That:

- are accessible to all students
- are perceived as fun to a wide variety of students
- have few rules
- allow students to enter the group with a minimum of disruption
- can easily be adapted – i.e. made easier or more difficult
- are age-appropriate

(Passentino, Elise, Cranfield, & Phyliss, 1994)

● Helpful Tips for Including Students with Disabilities

- Teach all students to include each other despite differing abilities
- Reinforce positively any and all attempts on the parts of all students, especially general education students who participate and assist when asked. Some students may be shy or apprehensive about participating, so praise any efforts.
- Remember, students with disabilities may have weak social skills and need assistance to fit in. This encourages positive interactions. For example, if a child with a disability has motor skills that limits participation, think of what he/she can hold from his/her wheelchair to be involved. Everyone has to come to him to get the item, and in the process many spontaneous interactions occur such as giving high fives or a verbal prompt.
- Learn everyone's name and call each student by name
- Intervene and facilitate interactions whenever possible
- Answer questions about disabilities. Emphasize how children are alike and remain positive. Select recess activities that are image enhancing and emphasize skills of students who are disabled. Use recess as a natural time to provide disability awareness. (Passentino, Elise, Cranfield, & Phyliss, 1994)



Developed by Rebecca Mohler, MA, OTR/L, Shannon Kerns, MOT, OTR/L & Susan Bazyk, PhD, OTR/L for Every Moment Counts (2014).

Revised 2021. www.everymomentcounts.org